

THE FATHER

HENRY COPLEY GREENE

CERT

A not very Christmas like
present from Frederick R
to

Susan

with hearty good wishes
for 1904 Christmas and
New Years 1904 - 1905.



THE FATHER

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

JOHN WATSON	<i>A Capitalist</i>
MRS. WATSON	<i>His Wife</i>
RALPH	<i>Their Son</i>
MARGARETTA	<i>Their Daughter</i>
ELIZABETH WOOD	<i>A Singer</i>

TIME: *September, 1896*

PLACE: *Mr. Watson's house at Mount Desert*

THE
FATHER

A Drama

By
HENRY COPLEY GREENE

Author of
"Pontius Pilate," "Theophile," "Plains and
Uplands of France," Etc., Etc.

MCMV
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ACT I

The Parlor. Doors left and right. In the center, a table; on it, around a simple but handsome lamp, magazines, a novel or two, larger books, a portfolio, and some embroidery. Near the embroidery, two chairs, one standing askew. Against the right-hand wall and under a framed photograph of Lincoln, a stiff wooden chair; in the corner further back, an arm-chair. To the left of it, an open window, and nearer the middle a glass door, through both of which the darkening afterglow of sunset is seen. Over a corner fireplace to the left, on the brick mantelpiece, a vase of white roses and a photograph of Duse. Between them a cast of "La Femme Inconnue."

MARGARETTA turns from the window and stands glancing quickly back and forth from the roses to the photographs, takes a photograph of Elizabeth from the portfolio on the table, sets it beside the photograph of Duse, and seats herself in the rocking-chair.

MRS. WATSON

Entering left

Not yet, Margaretta.

MARGARETTA

Who, Momps?

MRS. WATSON

Your father, dear.

MARGARETTA

Oh! Prob'ly he stopped in Bar Harbor—for grub, you know.

MRS. WATSON

Gently

"Grub"?

MARGARETTA

Well, *feed*, Mommy darling, if you prefer it.

MRS. WATSON

I really prefer English.

MARGARETTA

But Momps—

MRS. WATSON

Listen!

To herself

No.

MARGARETTA

What *are* you celebrating?

MRS. WATSON

I thought I heard the horn. I told Peters to blow it when he got to the turning, so that I could be at the door to meet your father.

After a pause, catching sight of the photograph on the table

Is that Elizabeth?

MARGARETTA

Sure.

MRS. WATSON

Why not have kept her with the rest of your friends?

MARGARETTA

She's a celebrity; anyhow, she's going to be. And then, I want Pa to see her as soon as he arrives. So there she is—in *his* room, too, in case he goes right up.

Mrs. WATSON

But he'll see her *herself*.

Putting aside the embroidery

MARGARETTA

Will he? She's liable, you know, to take most as long coming from the beach as Dad from Idaho!

Mrs. WATSON

She *does* delight in it.

After a pause

MARGARETTA

It's perfect fizz for her, specially when Ralph's along.

With serious intensity

Mrs. WATSON

And Ralph is 'along' now?

MARGARETTA

Sure.

Mrs. WATSON

Margaretta, do you realize how you murder the Queen's English?

MARGARETTA

No worse than Elizabeth.

Mrs. WATSON

That's hardly true, dear, except when she makes fun of you. And even if it were true, she would be hardly a good model for you.

Lighting the lamp

Her mother could not give her your advantages; and in the last years she seems to have lived in really . . . rather

Bohemian surroundings . . . with singular sweetness, I admit. I am not condemning her. She's wonderfully kind to you, with her sunrise walks and her riding and singing; and then she has . . . well . . . the sort of genius that transfigures almost impossible remarks.

MARGARETTA

And capers?

MRS. WATSON

Yes, actions, too. Yet, some of them, even lit up with her special exquisiteness, I could hardly bear in my *daughter*.

MARGARETTA

Getting up

Momps!

MRS. WATSON

Well, dear.

MARGARETTA

You wouldn't mind 'em, would you, in your *daughter-in-law*?

MRS. WATSON

It has n't come to that?

MARGARETTA

But s'pose it *bad*.

MRS. WATSON

Ralph would have told me.

MARGARETTA

Of course, dearest.

*On the arm of her mother's
chair*

And they're not even engaged; at least, when they went out they were n't. I almost hope they are n't. They both seemed so ecstatically full of fears.

A pause

Was yours like that?

MRS. WATSON

Your father's love and mine? Yes, dear, for a while.

MARGARETTA

"A while"?

MRS. WATSON

You *know* we're happy.

MARGARETTA

Um! I do know you're *good*. But sometimes, sometimes, you know, I do long to see you both, oh, just beautifully bad!

MRS. WATSON

That's worse than . . . Elizabeth.

MARGARETTA

How you hate her!

Looking her in the eyes

MRS. WATSON

No, in a way I almost love her. And yet—. Margaretta, do *you* think she cares for Ralph?

MARGARETTA

It's as plain as the nose on your dear sweet exquisite face!

MRS. WATSON

Without a smile

And if it *is*?

MARGARETTA

Dad won't object, will he?

MRS. WATSON

Half to herself

His letter —

MARGARETTA

Interrupting

He *wrote*? *You* wrote about her?

Kissing her

Oh, Mommy, dear, dear Mommy!

MRS. WATSON

Disengaging herself

Yes, I wrote, and I tried to be fair.
But —

MARGARETTA

Elizabeth, outside, is heard singing Sieglinde's part of the final duet in Act I of the "Walküre"

Sh-sh! —

Does n't *that* convince you?

MRS. WATSON

Her voice is beautiful; but the whole subject — of the opera, I mean — makes me *shiver*.

MARGARETTA

Deprecatingly

Hm. The brother and sister business? Yes?

Mrs. Watson assents

But then, it's just symbolic, you know. Love and Spring and all that. Listen.

Elizabeth stops singing

Momps, *do n't* trouble him with your prejudices! Do n't! Do n't! Think how he loves her!

MRS. WATSON

Am I prejudiced?

Getting up slowly

Even without her gift it would be a problem, Margaretta; and with it, *can* a clash be avoided? Think of the conditions: Ralph settled, full of his problems, absorbed in work—and she, a singer, mixed up with managers, fêted, excited, elated . . . Why, not one pair in a thousand—

MARGARETTA

They're one in ten thousand!

Comically serious

MRS. WATSON

Only character—character rooted in generations of strength—nothing else could carry it through. Why, even your father with all his strength could hardly —

Without a smile

MARGARETTA

Have made a bang-up success of it? P'raps *not!* But Ralph's had the benefit of *his* bringing up, and with Elizabeth—!

Joyously

MRS. WATSON

Yes. Perhaps—I hope so—perhaps my instincts *are* deceiving me.

ELIZABETH

Margaretta—!

At the glass door, radiant

I *beg* your pardon, Mrs. Watson. You were talking?

A bit chilled as she sees Mrs. Watson

MARGARETTA

Yes, of Ralph and the beastly poisons and acids and . . . and burners and scales and reactions, and things that he keeps up there! And *Momps* thinks it'd be better if he 'd loaf summers. I do n't, do you?

ELIZABETH

Unconsciously No-o . . . that is,—yes! Why,
Listening why *should* he work while all the world's
a heaven of silver and crimson and
sea music?

MARGARETTA

To Mrs. Watson Do you s'pose Dad thinks Idaho 's like
that?

To Elizabeth By the way, dearest, where *is* Ralph?

ELIZABETH

Ralph? Oh, star-gazing somewhere.

MARGARETTA

Under her breath Elizabeth!

MRS. WATSON

Getting up Could you tell me a little more exactly,
Miss Wood? I should be sorry not to
have him back when his father comes.

ELIZABETH

Suddenly radiant Then, then, then, Mr. Watson *has n't*
come yet! Oh, I *am* glad. I *do* so want
to see him, as soon as he arrives.

A moment's hesitation I've heard so much of him, Mrs. Wat-

son, — carrying the flag at Cold Harbor, when he was only a boy! and then later, his mines and the school for singers! and now, such bravery among the rioters! Is that he?

Outside, a ring at the front door

MARGARETTA

No; it can't be. Momps said Peters was to blow the horn when they got to the turning. Did n't you, Momps?

MRS. WATSON

Peters might have forgotten.

MARGARETTA

Peters never forgets.

ELIZABETH

But perhaps we did n't hear it.

MARGARETTA

Oh, I *think* so.

Sarcastically

The bell rings again

Biddies all off on a bat, Momps?

ELIZABETH

Or perhaps Mr. Watson told Peters to keep still so that he could surprise you.

MARGARETTA

That's it!

Starting toward the right-hand door

MRS. WATSON

That might be it.

Also turning

MARGARETTA

No: I'll go.—Dad, Dad, is it you? Dear old man!

ELIZABETH
It must be he.

In the doorway
MARGARETTA
I should say not!

Sitting down again at the table
MRS. WATSON
No, it is n't he.

Still in the doorway
In the hall, outside
MARGARETTA
Thought you were Dad, Charley.
Telegram? For him? Thanks. Office
be open for an answer?

Outside
TELEGRAPH BOY
All night, Miss Watson.

MARGARETTA
Good night.

Outside
TELEGRAPH BOY
Good night.

*Margaretta, returning, begins
to open the telegram*
MRS. WATSON
Margaretta! What are you thinking of?

*On the point of tossing it to
her mother*
MARGARETTA
That's so; it's the same one they
'phoned over, two hours ago, of course.
Cipher, too.
You *have n't* got the code? Truly-ruly?
So help you . . . Saint Patrick?

MRS. WATSON
Certainly not.

MARGARETTA
All right, then.

Tossing the telegram into her lap

ELIZABETH
Well, that was n't Mr. Watson. But
he'll be here soon, I suppose.

MRS. WATSON
I think I'll take this to his room.
Yes, he said he'd be here *some* time this
evening.

*Getting up
Absently*

ELIZABETH
Margaretta.
Oh, Margaretta! Margaretta

She goes out to the right

MARGARETTA
Why, what *is* it?

*Her arms about her and her
cheek against her forehead*

*Drawing back a little, she
looks at her*

ELIZABETH
Dearest.

A pause

MARGARETTA
Then . . . you and Ralph?

ELIZABETH
Ralph and I?

MARGARETTA
You *are* —?

ELIZABETH
Well?

MARGARETTA
Are you?

Kissing her softly and slowly

ELIZABETH

Dearest!

*Holding her at arms-length
and gazing into her face*

MARGARETTA

Oh, I *was* off my trolley! when you said Ralph was "star-gazing somewhere."

ELIZABETH

Were you, dear?

MARGARETTA

Yes, who would n't be? And then, why did n't you come back *together*, arm in arm, you know, sort-er walkin'-down-the-aisle-wise?

ELIZABETH

I needed to be alone.

MARGARETTA

I do n't understand.

ELIZABETH

Do n't you?

MARGARETTA

No.

ELIZABETH

Well, perhaps you can 't, dear. But if all *your* grays had been turned golden, if everything that was gold before had grown . . . celestial; if *your* little body had been suddenly set quivering with a mystery that made your soul's song one

with the sea and stars—Margaretta,
Margaretta, *then* you would understand. *A pause*

MARGARETTA

Yes, dear, *if*.

ELIZABETH

Come.

There, there—your soul's still such a
funny little chrysalis; but it soothes me
to feel it, dear.

*Seating herself near the table.
Margaretta, sitting in Eliza-
beth's lap, nestles her head
against her shoulder*

MARGARETTA

Really?

ELIZABETH

And now I'm warm again.

MARGARETTA

Did *Ma* frizzle you?

Sitting up, wide-eyed

ELIZABETH

No. But it chilled me to see that her
soul, you know, was still so much more
frightened than *she* was trying not to be.

MARGARETTA

Elizabeth, can you pry into my insides
like that?

ELIZABETH

Sometimes.

A pause

The way she felt scares me a little even
now. I'm afraid she thinks—. Tell
me, what *does* she think of me?

Getting up. MARGARETTA
Do you really want to know?

ELIZABETH
Yes!

MARGARETTA
Really?

Leaning forward, intensely ELIZABETH
Yes, I say.

Re-entering, right MRS. WATSON
I forget, *did* you tell me where to look
for him, Miss Wood?

Rising ELIZABETH
Who, Mrs. Watson?

MRS. WATSON
My son.

ELIZABETH
No. No, I can't have. I do n't know.
We took different roads, you see.

MRS. WATSON
Really?
Very well.

Turning toward the door

*Trying to bridge the chasm
between them* ELIZABETH
Won't you wait here for him? He's
surely on his way.

MRS. WATSON
I'm afraid I should disturb you two.

MARGARETTA
Not in the least, Mommy.
Will she, dear?

ELIZABETH
Do stay, Mrs. Watson.

MARGARETTA
As I was just going to say, Elizabeth,
Mommy thinks . . .
that you're charming.

ELIZABETH
Really?

MARGARETTA
Yes. And . . . and exquisite.

ELIZABETH
"Truly-ruly?"

MARGARETTA
And . . . and . . . a genius!

ELIZABETH
Really?

MRS. WATSON
Yes.

MARGARETTA
But then she thinks you're —

ELIZABETH
Well?

MARGARETTA
Unconventional!

*Supremely
To Elizabeth
Mrs. Watson sits down to her
embroidery*

With roguish sternness

Relenting

*With gentle humor
A pause*

MRS. WATSON
Margaretta!

*With a quizzically birdlike
nod*
ELIZABETH
Um?

MARGARETTA
And—

ELIZABETH
And *what*, dear?

MARGARETTA
Freakish!

MRS. WATSON
My child!

Maliciously
MARGARETTA
Fresh!

MRS. WATSON
Be still, Margaretta!

MARGARETTA
Light!

Standing up, reproachfully
ELIZABETH
Oh!

*As Mrs. Watson also gets up
Pompously*
MARGARETTA
And in comparison with *Ralph*—
who is “rooted in generations of
strength” — rather weak.

ELIZABETH
Perhaps so . . . yes . . .

MRS. WATSON

Margaretta, you're simply unpardonable. Miss Wood, if you will come to me a little later, I will explain what Margaretta has so misstated.

ELIZABETH

You are very kind, Mrs. Watson.

MARGARETTA

"Misstated?" Understated — not stated at all! Great Gosh! with her whims and her notions about being "rooted in generations of strength," and then her letters to Dad, why we've just *got* to be candid. Anyhow I shall be, and if you are n't, why then you *are* weak — very. Elizabeth.

Elizabeth!

Elizabeth!

Dearest. Forgive me.

I *didn't* mean to hurt.

ELIZABETH

There's nothing to forgive, dear; it's true, I *am* weak.

MARGARETTA

But — but you *won't* be, dear?

ELIZABETH

No, I hope not, I hope not.

As Elizabeth walks noiselessly away

Turning

Mrs. Watson goes out to the right

After an astonished pause

Seeing Elizabeth quiver

No answer

Silence

Her arms about her

Kneeling

Raising Margaretta's face with her right hand, while with the left she smooths back the hair

Ralph appears at the French window

Her eyes fixed on Ralph

RALPH
May I come in?

ELIZABETH
May you?

MARGARETTA
"Sweet dreams, Margaretta"?

*Getting up and dodging back
as Ralph enters and takes both
of Elizabeth's hands*

ELIZABETH
You'll tell your mother he's back,
won't you, and then — to bed, dear?

MARGARETTA
Yes, but I'm to come for you at sunrise?

ELIZABETH
"Sure!"

Facing her

MARGARETTA
Good night.

*After a disconcerted instant,
embracing and embraced
Her hand on Ralph's shoulders*

Dear old man, good night.

RALPH
Sleep tight.

Kissing her

MARGARETTA
One more?

To Elizabeth

ELIZABETH
Yes, and now —
Scoo-oo-oo-oo-oot!

*Forcing herself to chase her
with hand-clappings*

*Margaretta goes out right,
leaving the door ajar*

*Elizabeth, returning and pass-
ing Ralph slowly, sinks into
Mrs. Watson's chair*

RALPH

Elizabeth! You have n't been doubting yourself?

As her eyes seek his

Of course not. You are n't so cowardly. And *I* never *used* to be a coward. I was n't even much afraid of not winning you —

ELIZABETH

Archly

Ralph!

RALPH

— But coming back, alone under the stars, I met the fear of losing you. And I found that only years of life with you could lift me high enough to face it.

ELIZABETH

I'm glad you think I help you. And you know I'm even rather glad that you were morbid? *I* can't always cage my black-winged thoughts and free the nightingales.

She looks away and her hand moves over Mrs. Watson's embroidery

Looking up.

RALPH

Something *has* been troubling you.

ELIZABETH

Yes, I was afraid, I'm still afraid, that you're building on illusions.

RALPH

Nonsense!

ELIZABETH

No, Ralph. You're even and wise and strong, dear, so you don't see that I'm impulsive, freakish, weak.

RALPH

But *Elizabeth* —

ELIZABETH

Another thing: I'm afraid that even *you* can't change me very fast.

RALPH

*Jumping up, and walking up
and down*

Change you! Change you! You, Elizabeth! I would n't have you different —

ELIZABETH

With a flash of gay triumph

Come, do n't protest too much. It is n't "moderate."

RALPH

Great Heaven . . . !

ELIZABETH

Roguishly

S-s-sh! Do n't swear, dear. It is n't "conventional."

RALPH

And suppose it *is n't*.

MRS. WATSON

Outside

Margaretta!

RALPH

Elizabeth! You look as if the universe were coming to an end.

ELIZABETH

She *is* wise . . . terribly . . .

Half to herself

MARGARETTA

Mummy! If you interrupt 'em, your blood be on your head!

Outside

That's a kind, considerate Mummy. Good night.

A pause

The door shuts

ELIZABETH

She's *gone*!

In quiet delight

RALPH

I see it now. What you were saying about being freakish and weak, my mother didn't say to you, of course. But she did say it?

Stalking to the door and back again

ELIZABETH

Yes.

RALPH

Try as she will, dear, I'm afraid she'll *never* understand you. But when she's once accepted you —

After another turn

ELIZABETH

If she accepts me!

Getting up

RALPH

She will. And when she does, will *you* —

ELIZABETH

Do all I can to understand her? and see things

With a little shiver

as she does? . . . for your sake? That *is* what you were going to say, *is n't* it? Yes, I will. But now, I *must* tell you why, in all these minutes that ought to have been radiant, I've been so little . . . the girl you love.

RALPH

Moods can't change *you*, dear.

ELIZABETH

Do you know what I really am? I'm not "rooted," like you, "in generations of strength." My weakness is rooted in weakness. My mother—

RALPH

I know, I know.

ELIZABETH

No, not what I know; that her joy must once have been too passionately exquisite for this world, and her sorrow so terrible that sometimes, even in the later years, I've seen her shaken to the depths with great gusts of it.

RALPH

That I did n't know; even now I do n't quite understand.

ELIZABETH

Nor I.

A silence

But it shows me how deep my wildness

and my weakness lie. . . . Ralph, ought you, with all the great things that depend on you, ought you to hamper yourself with *me*?

RALPH

I'm nothing without you.

ELIZABETH

Nonsense, nonsense.

With wistful gayety

RALPH

No, dearest, *sense*. Since you've lit up my world for me, problems that used to be dark and shapeless have glimmered into crystals. I begin to see almost a new universe.

ELIZABETH

Because of *me*, Ralph?

Laughing

RALPH

Because of you.

ELIZABETH

Then you'll take me, still?

RALPH

Take you?

ELIZABETH

Just as I am? Whatever I am?

RALPH

Yes! Yes!

Kissing her

ELIZABETH

You may have to do it pretty soon, then!

RALPH

Have to?

ELIZABETH

I may make you . . . make off with me
. . . to-morrow.

RALPH

Half delighted, half incredulous Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

Yes. If your *father's* going to analyze and dissect me, if he begins, even considerably, to sort and pigeon-hole my traits —

RALPH

That's not his way. He's whole-hearted, straight-forward, impulsive, with all his firmness!

ELIZABETH

But your mother's been writing.

RALPH

Not to prejudice him!

ELIZABETH

But if she *has* by mistake, if for any reason he's cold, you won't wait, will you, to see my soul sliced and put on a slide and stared at through a microscope?

RALPH

Do you realize what men would say if I "made off with you"?

ELIZABETH

I know, I know, just what they have said, that you're so rich and I, so poor. I *used* to mind that. But now, I'm glad you can have the fun of giving me things.

RALPH

So am I, very. But that is n't it. The things they'd say now, dearest, would seem almost to lower our love.

ELIZABETH

That *can't* be lowered.

A coach horn is heard

RALPH

Not for us—

It sounds again, nearer

ELIZABETH

Hark! He's coming. And that horn of his would sound like the last trump to me if we could n't . . . just ride away. It is n't that I mind the pain, Ralph — at least I think not — but the pettiness, the ugliness.

RALPH

Do n't think you must plead with me. If it is n't all gladness, if there's a word of questioning —

Seeing her sensitiveness

ELIZABETH

We'll ride off and away? with the breath of sunrise in our faces and the dew on the grass and the branches?

RALPH

And the sea booming on the rocks.

ELIZABETH

And then, after a day all joy in the mountains, when we're married, you and I, shall we come back and confound them?

RALPH

Yes!

ELIZABETH

He's here!

RALPH

That's his voice.

ELIZABETH

No, I *do n't* want to see him yet.

Good night! Good-bye! Say I went to bed exhausted, hours and hours and hours ago. But come and tell me what *he* says. And if he does n't just hug the idea of me,

then at sunrise—?!

RALPH

We'll *have* our gallop.

Indistinct voices are heard outside to the right

*Impulsively
Turning toward the door to the left, playfully*

Going out

CURTAIN

ACT II

Mr. Watson's room. A window to the right; near it, a closet door. To the left, back, another door; on the left, forward, a third. In the center of the room, a large plain table with a green-shaded student lamp, an inkstand, a pile of letters and telegrams, a few books, a photograph of Elizabeth. To the left of the table, a leather-covered arm-chair; to the right, a lighter chair of wood; against the wall, right, a third chair. In the whole gray room, no ornaments, only a portrait of Mrs. Watson hanging to the left, and over the door at the back, two flags.

MRS. WATSON

Are you sure you won't have supper?

MR. WATSON

Quite, thank you. I stopped at the Commodore's, you see; a miraculous dinner, soufflés, jellies, champagne. After that, anything else would be a sacrilege!

Yes . . . Yes . . .

Where's Ralph?

MRS. WATSON

There's another, John, in cipher. I know, because they telephoned it first, as usual.

MR. WATSON

After me again, those brokers?

"In view of rumors, mining stocks fall.

Do I wish to sell out my interest?"

Entering, left front, and turning as Mr. Watson, in a light woolen traveling suit, follows her into the room

Looking over the telegrams

Putting them down

Pointing to the table

*Opening the telegrams
Translating by means of a
code-book which he takes from
his pocket*

Tossing aside telegram and book

Nonsense! . . . "They await my reply"? They *can* wait. — Where's Ralph, Mabel?

MRS. WATSON

I left him with this friend of Margaretta's.

Smiling

MR. WATSON

Ironically

Margaretta's? And Margaretta? She's with them?

Grave

MRS. WATSON

A pause

No, in bed.

She left word, though, twice, that you were to kiss her in her sleep. Her soul, she "guessed," would "know it and hug you."

Laughing

MR. WATSON

How like her; the "hug," I mean. The "soul" sounds rather . . . different.

MRS. WATSON

She *has* been changing.

MR. WATSON

Not losing her drollery?

MRS. WATSON

No. If anything, that's grown on her.

MR. WATSON

Winding his watch and laying it on the table

Good! Good! But, Mabel, I've been thinking about her a good deal in crossing the plains.

MRS. WATSON

And what came of it?

MR. WATSON

Well, in the end . . .

in the end it seemed to me that if you or I should die, Mabel, or if any great shock should come to her, she 'd grow up in a *twinkling*.

MRS. WATSON

She *is* growing up.

MR. WATSON

You don't mean she's got sentimental?

MRS. WATSON

Far from it. But this extraordinary friend of hers seems to have opened her eyes almost startlingly on life.

MR. WATSON

Um.

I don't wonder. Even your rather guarded letters gave me an impression of great charm.

Has Ralph been here all along?

MRS. WATSON

Yes, breaking promise after promise to pay visits, on the Shore and in the Adirondacks.

MR. WATSON

Will she take him?

Seating herself at the table

He takes off his coat and waist-coat, hangs them in the closet, puts on his smoking jacket and comes back

Lighting a cigar

A pause

Smiling

Without a smile

MRS. WATSON

From what Margaretta says, I'm afraid she will, unless you interfere.

MR. WATSON

Why, you wrote she was delightful, almost a genius —

MRS. WATSON

Yes; but weak!

MR. WATSON

Does Ralph need a Hercules?

MRS. WATSON

— And they're both so in the clouds!

MR. WATSON

Such a rare symptom!

MRS. WATSON

Don't be sarcastic, John; I'm *troubled*, really.

He lays down his cigar

My reasons sound paltry, I know, and yet . . . their love is such a tissue of dreams and folly and song that I can't imagine it surviving the strains of life.

MR. WATSON

Need there be strains? There's money enough. As for other things . . .

He falls silent, a look of pain crossing his face.

she won't have to suffer as you had to suffer . . . He won't have to suffer as I had to suffer in telling . . . you before we were married —

MRS. WATSON
John!

Gently, as she leans across the table

MR. WATSON
As you wish, Mabel.
You're right.

*Taking her hand a moment
Getting up
A pause*

That's past. And now, at this very moment, perhaps, Ralph and she are planning out their life.
Would you have me thwart them?

After a turn across the room

MRS. WATSON
Only for *their* sake.

MR. WATSON
For *their* sake?

Taking a revolver from his hip-pocket and fingering it as he walks up and down

It turned out useless, you know, my taking this with me. There was n't a miner in Idaho that could n't have "got the drop on me." Won't *they* be a good deal like that?

A pause. He puts down the revolver

MRS. WATSON
You brought your *men* to their senses.

MR. WATSON
Mabel, in such a love as Ralph's must be, there's something that I for one hate to interfere with.
In spite of its folly, if there *is* folly in it, it may lift a man higher than he'd climb without it.

Another pause

MRS. WATSON

Yes, John.

MR. WATSON

And still you 'd break this off?

MRS. WATSON

Puzzled

Yes, almost; yes, I *would*.

MR. WATSON

You, who've always pleaded for his independence, and held me back—held me back rightly—when I've wished to oppose him?

MRS. WATSON

Almost impatiently

Yes.

MR. WATSON

But why? Tell me. You can't wish me to follow with *tight* shut eyes.

MRS. WATSON

I've said all I can say.

MR. WATSON

You mean they're things you've no right to say?

MRS. WATSON

No.

MR. WATSON

Well then? Can't you explain them?

MRS. WATSON

No, John. They're simply . . . too impalpable.

MR. WATSON

And you wish me to destroy what seems to Ralph the highest possibility in his life, because of impalpable nothings? It's preposterous, Mabel. Think! I don't even know the girl's name.

Walking up and down

MRS. WATSON

You'll know it soon enough with Margaretta's dinning in your ears of Elizabeth this, Elizabeth that, Elizabeth the other—

As he turns away

MR. WATSON

Elizabeth? A *name* to suit even you, I should think.

Who's *this*?

Suddenly stopping in front of Elizabeth's photograph

MRS. WATSON

That? Why, "Elizabeth."

MR. WATSON

A wonderful face, Mabel.

Knocking outside

MARGARETTA

Can I come in?

Home, Daddy?

Dear old Daddy! Darling Dad!

Entering, left front, with a rough bath-wrap around her

Hugging him

MR. WATSON

Why, Margaretta! How you've changed!

MRS. WATSON

You ought to be abed.

MARGARETTA

To Mrs. Watson

With that pesky telephone raising Cain in my very ears?

To Mr. Watson

That reminds me of your crazy cipher, Dad. "Pike's. Idaho, August 17, '99. Delayed in transmission. Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod. James Beard." What 's it mean?

MR. WATSON

How should I know?

MARGARETTA

Hugging him again

Oh, you duck, you duck of a Dad!

Leaning back

But isn't it foolish!! "Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod. James Beard." And this—they just 'phoned it over—"Ponder. Judex. S. & B." What do you s'pose it means? Eh, old man? "Ponder."

MR. WATSON

Taking up Elizabeth's picture

Just business, dear.

MARGARETTA

Oh, you've found her, have n't you! I put her there for that. Is n't she beautiful? Just *is n't* she?

MR. WATSON

Haunted

Yes . . .

MRS. WATSON

John, ought not Margaretta to write down these telegrams before she forgets them?

MARGARETTA

I shan't forget 'em. "Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod. James Beard." "Ponder. Judex. S. & B." "Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod." "Ponder. Judex." Dad, what *can* such truck mean?

MR. WATSON

Look it up, and write it out for me. Elizabeth *what*, Mabel?

*Giving her the code-book
While she sets to work near
the lamp*

MARGARETTA

Did n't Momps even tell you her name? Why, Mommy, you evil, evil-minded Mommy!

Looking up

MRS. WATSON

I can't remember everything when I write, Margaretta.

MARGARETTA

Not even Elizabeth's name?

Suddenly bending over the book

"Columnar. Antelope. Cash . . ."

MR. WATSON

Her name, Mabel?

MRS. WATSON

Her name? Wood.

MR. WATSON

What?

MRS. WATSON

Wood, Elizabeth Wood.

MARGARETTA

Muttering "Rioting recommences"?!

MRS. WATSON

What's that, Margaretta?

MR. WATSON

Wood? Don't you mean "Woods"?

MRS. WATSON

No, just the singular. — Margaretta . . .

MARGARETTA

As she turns over the leaves "Wires cut"?!

MR. WATSON

What . . . was her mother's name?

MRS. WATSON

You know about her mother? You always know about singers, don't you!

MARGARETTA

Turning over the leaves "Mine's afire"?!

MRS. WATSON

Margaretta, what *is* it?

MARGARETTA

"Miners . . ."

MR. WATSON

Mabel, tell me! Her *mother's* name?!

MRS. WATSON

Why, John, what's happened to you?

MR. WATSON

Nothing, I hope. But —

MARGARETTA
“—Miners seize dynamite.”

MRS. WATSON
Margaretta! Read it.

MARGARETTA
Let me finish first, Momps.

MR. WATSON
Tell me her mother's name.

MRS. WATSON
Why, John, are you insane?! With a fortune hanging in the balance, to insist on bagatelles?—Margaretta!

MARGARETTA
“Ponder.” *Still busily transcribing*

MRS. WATSON
Margaretta!

MR. WATSON
Mabel . . .

MRS. WATSON
Her mother's name? Yes, yes. Let me see. What *was* her mother's name? Clara? Clare? *Impatiently*

MR. WATSON
Clare.

MRS. WATSON
Yes, that's it, I think,—Clare, Clare Wood. *To Margaretta*
Have n't you finished that yet, child?

MR. WATSON

Clare?!

MARGARETTA

I'm afraid we 're dished, Daddy.

Reading

"Pike's, Idaho, August 17, '99. Delayed in transmission. John Watson, Bar Harbor, Maine. Rioting recommences. Wires cut. Mines afire. Miners seize dynamite. James Beard."

MRS. WATSON

It can't be true, John. Tell me it is n't true!

MARGARETTA

*As Mr. Watson lays down
the photograph*

Cheer up, Daddy; the worst is yet to come.

MRS. WATSON

John, think. Surely something can be done. Can't you sell, even at a loss, before this is known?

MARGARETTA

Sell, Mommy?—and smash the little stockholders and wreck the whole property?

MRS. WATSON

Be still, Margaretta. You can't understand these things.

MARGARETTA

But, Mommy—

MRS. WATSON
Be still.

MARGARETTA
Don't you want to hear t'other one?
Listen, Dad. "New York, August 18th,
7 P.M. John Watson, Esq., Bar Har-
bor, Maine. On rumors of further riot-
ing, stock has fallen to sixteen. Await
advices. S. & B."

MRS. WATSON
John! Think, think for us.

Helplessly

MR. WATSON
Your pencil, Margaretta.
"Messrs. Stone & Blackwell, 6 Wall St.,
New York City. Hold at any cost.
J. W." There, telephone that at once.
Good night.

Writing

MRS. WATSON
For the children's sake . . . !

MARGARETTA
Poor dear Daddy. Good night. Don't
you care, Daddy. It 'll all come out in
the wash.
Good night.

Kissing him

MR. WATSON
Quick!

MARGARETTA
Good night.

Gbeerily

She goes out back

MRS. WATSON

And you said a great shock would change her.

MR. WATSON

Mabel, was Clare Wood the whole name?

MRS. WATSON

Still harping on that? Does our loss mean nothing to you?

MR. WATSON

There are worse things than loss. I can retrieve that.

MRS. WATSON

Worse things? What worse things?

MR. WATSON

Don't keep me in suspense. *Was* there another name?

MRS. WATSON

Clare Wood?—Let me see.—Yes, Clare Wood-Mayano. “Mlle. Clare Wood-Mayano.”

John!—Look at me.

MR. WATSON

God! *God!* They have n't deserved it. Even Clare, even I, never deserved such punishment. And did n't *we* suffer enough—too much?! With her ten-

Mr. Watson sinks into a chair, his head between his arms on the table

Their eyes meet

After a long pause, standing

derness and beauty — it *bad* to be! it *bad* to be! Yet . . . the desolation . . .

MRS. WATSON
What *is* this?

MR. WATSON
And now my child . . . *mine* . . .

MRS. WATSON
Be calmer. Try to control yourself.

MR. WATSON
Ralph . . . *loves* her!

A long pause. Singing is heard outside

MRS. WATSON
And I was talking of your ruin.

MR. WATSON
Is that Elizabeth?

MRS. WATSON
Yes, John.

MR. WATSON
How like her . . . mother's voice.

MRS. WATSON
Don't speak of her!

MR. WATSON
With her voice in my ears? No. You've held me still too long.

In broken tones

Standing

Silence can't strangle sins. Unless we acknowledge them, they live, they pursue, torture us: for all our repentance they punish us and our children. — Mabel,

if you had n't forbidden me to tell you even Clare's name, you would have known that Elizabeth . . .

He turns away

MRS. WATSON

I meant only the right.

A knock

MR. WATSON

We all of us *meant* the right.

Knocking again

MRS. WATSON

John, she 's knocking. Shall I send her away?

Again knocking

MR. WATSON

No.

MRS. WATSON

Shall I go, then?

MR. WATSON

Yes.

*After a pause
She goes out by the door, back
Slow repeated knocking. Mr.
Watson goes unsteadily to
left-front, and stands there
with his hand against the
door as if to hold it shut*

Under his breath

MR. WATSON

Elizabeth!

Outside, in bright tones

ELIZABETH

Mr. Watson, it 's I, Elizabeth Wood.
May I come?

MR. WATSON
No! No!

Under his breath

ELIZABETH
I shall if you don't say no.

*Entering as he opens the door,
and speaking furtively*

I thought, I thought Mrs. Watson would be here. But I've introduced myself already, have n't I, through a two-inch plank?! Won't you shake hands with me?

MR. WATSON
I'm glad, Elizabeth, that you're here.

Taking her hand

ELIZABETH
Then you won't think me too wild — for coming, I mean? Ralph was to tell all about me first; but when I saw him pacing up and down the garden, thinking, thinking, thinking — how to put it, I suppose — I decided perhaps you'd better just *see for yourself*.

With a slight gesture

Why, how worn you look! It's selfish of me, is n't it, to keep you talking now when you need to rest.

*Guilelessly looking up
Her hand on his shoulder*

MR. WATSON
That is n't it.

Gently

ELIZABETH
Has Mrs. Watson been frightening you,

then? Though she *is* so darling, I know she can't quite approve of me. She thinks I'm weak. And there she's wise, bitterly.

Looking up at him

You must help me, you who've always been so strong.

MR. WATSON

In pain

I?

ELIZABETH

Why, yes.

Seeing his pain

Mr. Watson,

A pause

if I've hurt you, it's unknowingly.

Her hand on his arm

You'll believe that, won't you?

MR. WATSON

He moves away

Yes . . .

ELIZABETH

But I have hurt you?

MR. WATSON

No; not you.

ELIZABETH

And still you wish to be alone?

MR. WATSON

It's better so.

ELIZABETH

Giving him her hand

Good night, Mr. Watson.

MR. WATSON

Elizabeth, first, may I have—a kiss?

ELIZABETH

Why, yes! yes!

Your eyes now seem almost like Ralph's
for tenderness.

*Looking up for a kiss on the
lips*

*As he takes her head between
his hands and kisses her on
the forehead*

MR. WATSON

Yours take me back....

A silence

RALPH

Father! Why, Elizabeth, ahead of me?

Entering, with decision

ELIZABETH

Yes; and I think I've won him.

RALPH

If not, it's a miracle.

To Mr. Watson

You *have* fallen in love with her? at
first sight? yourself? Candidly, have n't
you?!

Grasping his hand

Why, I forgot I had n't seen you! How
are you? Brown; but rather worn by
the strike? Well, with rest and this
happiness—!

MR. WATSON

Happiness?

*Overlooking his impression
of bitterness*

RALPH

Is n't she already almost what you called
my mother once?—you remember?—
“Your lily from Paradise”?

ELIZABETH

I begin to think not, Ralph.

MR. WATSON

You *are* that and more to me.

*To Elizabeth
Steeling himself*

And yet . . . and so—

ELIZABETH

“So”?

RALPH

Why, *father*!

MR. WATSON

—so I can’t—I would if I had the strength—I can’t talk with you now.

ELIZABETH

Offering her hand Good night, Mr. Watson.

MR. WATSON

Taking her hand Try not to judge me harshly.

ELIZABETH

I can’t understand you. But I know you would n’t give me pain unless . . . unless . . .

Turning toward the door Good night.

MR. WATSON

Good night, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

To Ralph, who follows her No, Ralph, stay!

She goes out, left-front

RALPH

Turning as the door shuts How can you let worldliness weigh

against such gentleness? How could you let her go?!

MR. WATSON

I have been talking with your mother—

After a pause

RALPH

My mother?

MR. WATSON

Yes.

RALPH

My decision's *made*.

MR. WATSON

Very well, Ralph. But before you . . . carry it out, I must tell you certain things. First, my affairs just now are in a critical state.

Indicating the papers on the table

I've received telegrams this evening which mean that we must live very carefully for a while. The rioting has begun again; the mines are on fire.

RALPH

I'm sorry, sir.

MR. WATSON

Wincing at the "sir"

I might have sold out, Ralph; but the loss would have been ruinous. As it is, we shall recover in the end.

He stops to study Ralph's face

RALPH

And meantime you think that I can't support my wife?

MR. WATSON

Not that you can't. But the scientific work you care for . . .

RALPH

Is unremunerative. Yes, I know.

MR. WATSON

Have you a right to sacrifice it?

RALPH

I think so.

MR. WATSON

*After pacing across the room
and back*

Very well. There's another thing which I hoped to put off. — Sit down, please.

RALPH

Taking out his watch

I — we both — need our night's sleep, I think.

MR. WATSON

Try not to be so hard.

RALPH

I? To you?!

MR. WATSON

I know I seem hard. Ralph, I *need* to be near you.

RALPH

If only we could be friends again! If you only would make it possible! But I can't understand you.

MR. WATSON

Sit down; listen.

You *shall* understand me.

RALPH

Anything you can say will only separate us more.

MR. WATSON

Perhaps, and yet you *must* know.

Ralph, when I first knew your mother—or thought that I knew her—I drifted into what seemed deep friendship with the wife of—well, no matter about his name. Her tenderness and mystery brought me joy that grew into passion. It seemed to lift me above the real world. But the storm came. It brought us . . . to the earth.

RALPH

You left her?

MR. WATSON

I tried, with all my power, to make her let me claim her before the world. She had nothing but scorn—justly—for the “illusion” that had made me too weak to protect her against herself.

I have n’t seen her since. She hid herself away.

RALPH

Ah, now I know!

Seating himself also as Ralph obeys

Controlling himself

A pause during which Ralph glances toward the portrait of his mother, then back at Mr. Watson

A pause

Getting up suddenly

MR. WATSON

Are you sure you understand?

RALPH

I understand and despise you.

*Mr. Watson stands to receive
the blows*

Not for your sin—I could forgive you that—but for your trying to stifle love with tales of your “illusion”—trying to turn me to some . . . richer woman, as you turned . . . to my mother.

MR. WATSON

Ralph, listen—

RALPH

Striding forward

No.

Love can't be turned; *can't* be smothered. Its fire and light are so unquenchable, yet keen, that I can see all your pettiness as distinctly now as that—that—that!

*Pushing pens and pencils
across the table*

MR. WATSON

It *blinds* you.

RALPH

It has opened my blind eyes.

MR. WATSON

But—

RALPH

*Going to Mr. Watson's side
of the table*

No. It can't be the icy communion that I see you plead for! Call it mystic if you

will, her love and mine; but it's rich
with the blood of life. It must be fulfilled.

Turning to go

Do you understand *me* now?

MR. WATSON

Seizing him by the shoulder

Stop.

RALPH

Let me go!

MR. WATSON

Holding him by both shoulders

Your love, Ralph, is *impossible*.

RALPH

I shall marry her — within twelve hours.

MR. WATSON

Ralph —

RALPH

Let me go!

MR. WATSON

Not till you understand —

RALPH

Let me go!

MR. WATSON

I am . . . her father.

RALPH

Shrinking back from him

Her father? You?

You, father?

Suddenly

Father!

MR. WATSON

I never knew it till tonight.

RALPH

Unsteadily seating himself

We thought we had scaled Heaven . . .

MR. WATSON

If only I could have known. . . .

RALPH

If it weren't for you—!

MR. WATSON

Ralph, there *is* some comfort; you need not suffer as I have suffered.

RALPH

Getting up

You've lived and had your "pleasure"—

MR. WATSON

Not my *pleasure*.

RALPH

Yes—and a little pain—and years of happiness.

MR. WATSON

Don't be . . . quite merciless!

RALPH

You've *lived*—and you ask for mercy? Did you show mercy when you left her mother's sin to kill her? Did you show mercy when you gave life to Elizabeth . . . and me? By the justice of God—if there is one—you *deserve* no mercy. You

deserve all her mother's storms of pain;
and the fire — forever — that burns in me
now; and, for Elizabeth's sake . . .

MR. WATSON
Forgiveness!

RALPH
Never!

Thank God!

MRS. WATSON
Is it over? May I come, John?

RALPH
He's fainted, mother.
You don't need me?

MRS. WATSON
No. *She'll* need you more, I think.

Going

Hearing Mr. Watson fall forward across the table, he turns back, strides to the table, and leaning over it, lifts his father's inert head, looks into his face, and after letting the head sink again, bends forward to listen for the sound of breathing.

Catching sight of the pistol under his father's right hand, he takes it up and unloads it, then after listening to the breathing a moment more, strides to the door, back, and knocks

Outside

As she comes in

Seeing Mr. Watson she starts slightly

After a glance toward his father, he goes out, left

CURTAIN

ACT III

Elizabeth's room, papered with blue, which is figured conventionally with slight lines of white; matted floor, white woodwork. Back, right and left, two large Japanese photographs, colored, in white frames. In the center, back, wide folding doors. Toward the back, left, a door; further forward, a broad divan; another door left front. To the right, two windows curtained with white muslin. Near the center, a square white table with a vase of gentians, a few books and a blue vase lamp shaded by a Japanese paper globe.

In front of the table, Elizabeth sits reading. She is dressed in a creamy dressing-wrapper of thin silk, belted in with a white silk cord. Putting down her book, she takes her watch from the table, glances at it, puts it back, and tries in vain to go on with her reading. There is a knock at the door.

ELIZABETH
Ralph!

Starting up

MARGARETTA
"Ralph"? At this time of night?
Shocking!

Entering left, back

ELIZABETH
You at this time of night? Shocking,
Margaretta, shocking, *shocking!*

MARGARETTA
I've a good reason . . .

ELIZABETH
He's coming to tell me what your
"daddy" says. And, dear, if your "daddy"

does n't just long for this daughter-in-law . . .

MARGARETTA
Well, dear, what?

ELIZABETH
Nothing much.

MARGARETTA
But *what*?

ELIZABETH
Oh, just that Ralph and I—

MARGARETTA
Well? Ralph and you?

ELIZABETH
—at dawn—

MARGARETTA
Reproachfully Dawn, dearest?

ELIZABETH
—are going to gallop away and . . . get married!

MARGARETTA
Instead of walking with *me*?
Elizabeth nods Oh, you cussèd, dearest darling!
After a long bug But, Elizabeth, I saw Dad when he got home.

ELIZABETH
So did I.

MARGARETTA

Really?

ELIZABETH

Really.

MARGARETTA

But he didn't tell you that we 're *dished*, did he?

ELIZABETH

Why, no, dear.

MARGARETTA

Well, we are. 'Tis gone up the spout; Watsons dead broke!

ELIZABETH

How?

MARGARETTA

"Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod." That's how. No, I'm not off my head. That's cipher. I took it over the 'phone; and it means, "Rioting recommences. Wires cut. Mine's afire. Miners seize dynamite,"—and the stock's fallen to sixteen.

ELIZABETH

Poor Mr. Watson . . .!

MARGARETTA

Oh, it does n't matter for him. He's a corker from Corkerville, and he'll clamber up again before Mommy's wiped her eyes! But *you*, you and Ralph—

Surprised

Cheerily

ELIZABETH
Thoughtfully That's why he was so grave.

MARGARETTA
What can *you* do? That's what I've been thinking of all these hours.

ELIZABETH
It can't touch us, dear.

MARGARETTA
It can . . . put off your gallop.

ELIZABETH
Gaily Ask Ralph about that.

MARGARETTA
I *saw* Ralph an hour ago.

ELIZABETH
Startled Where?!

MARGARETTA
In the garden. I was leaning out the window, thinking; and I saw him there walking—and his head bowed down, oh, so sadly. I guess he was scheming—scheming schemes to support you. He can't get the professorship now, you see, that he tossed away last spring. So he'll have to drop science, and take to analyzing baking-powders and castoria—

ELIZABETH
Margaretta!

MARGARETTA
—and phosphates and soothing-
syrups—

ELIZABETH
Margaretta!!

MARGARETTA
—and fertilizers!

ELIZABETH
He shan't!

MARGARETTA
You've got to live, dear.

ELIZABETH
But *I* can support him. . . .

MARGARETTA
You?!

ELIZABETH
Listen.—Isn't that he?
Go, dear.
Go, go, go!

MARGARETTA
But you'll walk with me at sunrise?
That's in half an hour, you know.

ELIZABETH
Yes, I'll walk with you at sunrise
unless we've galloped away!

Going?

*As a door is heard shutting
outside
Footsteps outside
Pushing her along*

*In the doorway, left, front
Margaretta goes out
Listening to the footsteps,
Elizabeth stands motionless
whispering as they turn and
recede
As they come nearer*

*As they grow faint
Hurrying back to knock on
the folding door
The folding doors, thrown
open, show Ralph's laboratory
with Bunsen burners, scales,
test-tubes, etc., on shelves and
benches, which flank an aisle
leading to a large French win-
dow. Ralph stands facing
Elizabeth on the threshold*

With attempted coolness

*Going toward the windows,
right*

Ah?
Again?
Ralph!! Why, Ralph!

RALPH

I hoped . . . perhaps you were dozing.

ELIZABETH

Dozing?—before I'd seen you? Hardly, dear. But, Ralph, what's kept you? Thinking of ways to propitiate him when we get back? For he *has* forced us to have our ride! I can see that, yes, clearly, clearly, in this awful gravity of yours. Do you know, dearest, it makes you look like *him*?

RALPH

Elizabeth, we can't "have our ride."

ELIZABETH

Can't we? Not really? I'm sorry for that. It would have made the day so blessed.

Think:—dawn with the air shot through and through with sunlight, and

the waves all fire, and little flames leaping along their ripples as we rode on to the sand; then the blast in our faces, and the spray . . .

Oh Ralph, Ralph, the grandeur of that's too full for us to lose. Don't you think we might have it, even if your father *does* hug the thought of me!

Turning to Ralph

RALPH

If it could give you happiness . . .

Coming forward to her

ELIZABETH

I know, I know; if he agrees, the adventure's all gone from it! Well, there's something sweet, after all, in sunny fields of consent. They're flat, of course. But . . . he *did* come round, chivalrously?

RALPH

Dearest, he could n't change.

ELIZABETH

Could n't?

After an instant's thought

Oh, I'm not so sure of that. In fact, I think he could.

RALPH

But you don't understand . . .

ELIZABETH

Yes, Margaretta's told me.

RALPH

Margaretta?

ELIZABETH

Did n't you hear her just as you came into the laboratory? No? Well, she was here, and she told me.

RALPH

Incredulous Margaretta does n't know.

ELIZABETH

Yes, she does; she saw him; he told her.

RALPH

And *you* can still smile?

ELIZABETH

Why, yes! Would you have me cry? Mere millions don't matter to you and me. *Don't* worry! Now people can't say such critical things of me. And it's a reason for my appearing at once. And if I succeed—and I shall—why, you need n't . . . wallow in castoria and baking-powder and soothing-syrup and things, as that wretched Margaretta's been proposing. I shall be able to support us in *luxury*—unless there are children . . .

RALPH

Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

Simply Don't we hope for them, dearest? And after all, if I'm really a "genius," one

season of starring will support us for years and *years*.

RALPH

If supporting us were all . . .

ELIZABETH

What else could there be?

RALPH

There *is* something else; something that Margaetta has n't told you: something so terrible that I scarcely dare tell you.

ELIZABETH

You scarcely dare?

RALPH

Because it's . . . unspeakable.

He falls helplessly silent

ELIZABETH

You mean . . .

*Her hand on his shoulder,
gently*

that you were tempted—that I must forgive you for thoughts of deserting me?

RALPH

I was n't—thank God—so cowardly as *that*! I've been hunting all these hours for some way to tell you gently . . .

Her hand drops

what came so horribly to me. I thought I had found it. But life flared up again and dazed me and shook me so, when I saw you . . .

ELIZABETH

Well?

A silence What *is* it? Tell me.

RALPH

Elizabeth . . .

ELIZABETH

I must *know*.

RALPH

His voice very low While we live, what we hoped for . . . cannot be.

ELIZABETH

Cannot?

RALPH

Cannot.

ELIZABETH

But *why*?

He is silent Ralph, it isn't true. You're not this sycophant! *You* could n't fall so from the sky to mere earth. Why, the very stars would laugh . . . through their tears . . .

Seating herself on the arm of her chair

And yet—oh, it is!

RALPH

Dearest—

ELIZABETH

Don't speak.

RALPH
Elizabeth.

Softly

ELIZABETH
Be still.

After a short wait

RALPH
Things are tragic enough as they are.
Don't make them more tragic with
misunderstanding.

Getting up

ELIZABETH
I understand.
No, don't protest. It's clear enough.
Perhaps you thought . . . you loved me;
but wiser heads have shown you that . . .
I'm light, and weak and unstable. And
you think it the part of prudence—

*She turns away
Without noticing him, she
walks toward the windows,
right
Stilly*

RALPH
No, nothing that you think! Nothing!
Elizabeth!
Elizabeth—

ELIZABETH
Don't break into my memory. That's
all I have now, the memory . . . of a
dream. But oh, why couldn't you have
been even a little what I thought you?
Why not have made that beauty just a
little yours? Even now, if you only
could turn . . . But you prefer the life
that you've chosen—weighing your

atoms, theorizing, experimenting, confirming . . . alone.

RALPH

Elizabeth, for my sake, for your sake, because I need you helplessly, let me tell you, if only I can . . .

ELIZABETH

Oh, your care for appearances! the calculations that kept you tramping, tramping there, devising "explanations"—it's worse than mere infamy. I could admire that. But this . . .

He begins feeling in his waistcoat pocket

RALPH

Elizabeth, look.

Suddenly taking out and holding before her a small bottle

Look, I say.

She takes it

That was what kept me, tempting and tempting me, till thought for you gave me strength to conquer it.

ELIZABETH

"Tempting" you?

*Reading the label
Wearily setting down the bottle on the table*

No, you would n't have dared to die.—Don't try to explain. Go! Do you understand? Go, unless you wish me to despise you even more!

Ralph!

He goes toward the door, back left. She sinks into a chair, her eyes fixed on him

RALPH

Turning

If I go, we shan't meet again; and you

will never understand. It's better so,
perhaps . . .

ELIZABETH

Ralph.

RALPH

Elizabeth . . .

it might be easier for you to think I had
never been the man you cared for. And
so, if I could bear it, I should leave you;
we should n't meet again.

ELIZABETH

Is n't it best so?

RALPH

No! What we knew, as we sat beside
those waves under the stars, is too true
for that. And there's still too much
tragic wonder in the years that we must
live. Trust me . . .

ELIZABETH

You?

RALPH

I have not sinned. I've blundered and
confused you; but I haven't sinned.
I'm stronger, truer than I ever was.
Our suffering comes from others' guilt.
Though our happiness is dead,
Elizabeth, our love *must* live, like the
sun's fire,

*He opens the door. Her
bands grow rigid
Almost inaudibly*

*Shutting the door and turning
Coming forward*

With sorrowful tenderness

Taking her hand

Kneeling

His face between her hands

and the hush . . of night . . .

ELIZABETH

Lifting his head

Ralph!

Standing

Your face is gray. Your hands burn.

Ralph, Ralph, your *pain*!

*Her arm about him, her head
against his shoulder, she
walks with him towards the
laboratory*

Oh, forgive me, forgive me for doubting
you. Trust me. Let me share what's
hurting you.

RALPH

It's too . . . horrible.

ELIZABETH

Let me bear it.

*Her voice fading in the dis-
tance*

*A long pause, during which,
while he tells her, they are
seen startingly motionless,
against the French window,
through which the dawn ap-
pears over a near mountain*

ELIZABETH

Our happiness on earth . . . How our
souls sang under the stars. They're
faded now, and that . . . *is* dead?

RALPH

Don't think of our joy. We can't
bear to, yet.

ELIZABETH

Ralph, it isn't dead; it's alive still in
my finding you again, all, all, more than
I could dream you. That joy in your

dear tenderness, oh, let me feel the thrill
of it,

so . . . so . . .

RALPH

Elizabeth . . . !

ELIZABETH

Must you wake me?

RALPH

This brings us too near to the gulf we've
escaped from. It is n't safe!

ELIZABETH

Not while we live.

RALPH

And we *must* live. We must not let
ourselves be crushed. We must turn,
fight, hew out the days . . .

ELIZABETH

Ralph, does the life that holds us sepa-
rate mean much to you now?

RALPH

And yet we must serve it —
must put all we've lost tensely into the
effort.

ELIZABETH

Must we?

RALPH

You will? for our love's sake, for my
sake?

*As they seat themselves on the
divan, she draws him to her
Their eyes meet; their lips meet*

A long silence. He starts up

Looking up gently

*Knocking outside the labora-
tory*

ELIZABETH

I'll try, Ralph

Knocking

MRS. WATSON

Outside the laboratory

May I come?—I, your mother?

RALPH

Shall I tell her to come?

ELIZABETH

Dazed

Your mother . . .

MRS. WATSON

Shall I come?

ELIZABETH

Painfully

No . . .

RALPH

Shall I go to her?

ELIZABETH

With the saddest smile of consent

But don't stay long from me.

RALPH

I'll come back . . .

He strides off through the laboratory. A door is heard to open and shut. A long silence

ELIZABETH

Whispering

Effort . . to serve the life that separates us? Effort? alone?

Must I? Can I?

Ralph!

She walks back and forth, looking toward the laboratory. Passing the table she sees the bottle, hesitates, picks it up, looks at it, lays it down

I can't!

*She picks it up again and
seating herself on the divan,
sits long in thought
She uncorks the bottle, lifts it
to her lips, hesitates, drinks
Sitting with her thumb over
the mouth of it, she waits;
makes a movement as if to
drink more; then with short
little indrawn breaths, falls
along the divan. After a
long silence the door is heard
opening outside the laboratory*

RALPH

Elizabeth! He wants to come to you.
I told my mother to send him.
Was I right? No? Shall I call her
back?

*Standing against the light of
sunrise in the doorway*

ELIZABETH

No, Ralph . . .

Faintly

RALPH

How pale you are! I oughtn't to have
left you. You've been suffering.

Coming nearer

ELIZABETH

Yes. I was afraid to face . . . what you
will conquer . . . alone.

In pain

RALPH

Not alone.

ELIZABETH

Yes, you'll live. Forgive me. I . . .
wasn't strong enough.

*Catching sight of the bottle
Reaching out for it
She bows her head*

RALPH

You haven't . . .

Elizabeth! No!

I'll get help for you. Keep your courage up—just a moment!

ELIZABETH

Don't leave me—not *now*.

RALPH

I must.

ELIZABETH

*Faintly
Almost inaudibly*

It's useless. I can't be . . . saved.

Your hand. Even now you're veiled from me. Nearer.

RALPH

Sobbing

Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

You must be strong, dear. Don't be troubled. Nearer. So. Still nearer. Kiss me.—Oh, must I go . . . alone?

RALPH

*Whispering
Taking her hand he trembles;
suddenly noticing her other
hand, he takes the bottle; bends
forward, kissing her; then
standing, looks at the bottle;
lets the hand in which he
holds it sink; raises it almost to
his lips; dashes it to the ground*

Elizabeth, you have n't *left* me?

On his knees beside the divan

No! !

If only I *might* go with you. . .

MARGARETTA

Elizabeth!

Have you forgotten our walk? Eliza-
beth?

The sun's up; the sky's golden, the
waves are all flame! You have n't gone
on your gallop?!

Asleep?

Elizabeth . . .

Ralph, she is n't . . . ?

RALPH

Gone, Margaretta.

MARGARETTA

Gone?

MR. WATSON

May I come, Elizabeth?

Can you bear seeing me?

MRS. WATSON

Are you sure that *you* can bear it?

RALPH

Father! Go back! Wait! *Not* now!

MR. WATSON

Does *she* condemn me?

RALPH

She is at peace . . .

MR. WATSON

You don't mean what your face says!

Outside, after partly singing

Elizabeth's song

Knocking outside, right

Coming in

*Her hands on the head of
the divan*

With a shudder

As Ralph rises

*Staggering a little as she sinks
on her knees*

Outside the laboratory

*Coming through the labora-
tory supported by his wife*

To her husband

*Suddenly bearing, and strid-
ing toward them*

Not that?! Ralph! Can't you speak?
Let me pass, Ralph; let me see her.

MARGARETTA

Rising and meeting him

Don't look so, Father. See, her face smiles.

MR. WATSON

Though she died for my sin?

MRS. WATSON

For Margaretta's sake! John...!

RALPH

Leading her aside

Let him speak, Mother.

MR. WATSON

Kneeling

Elizabeth, forgive me! Forgive me! I never knew. Elizabeth!—The cruelty, the cruelty... when life seemed so sweet to her.

He lets his head fall on the edge of the divan. A pause, during which Margaretta stands in pain, her hands vaguely lifted over her father's head. He takes Elizabeth's hand and kisses it

Elizabeth... my child...

MARGARETTA

Father...

MR. WATSON

To Elizabeth

Sweet little one...

MARGARETTA

Father!

MR. WATSON

Must we still live?

MARGARETTA

Yes, for her sake, we that are left.

*Bending down and lifting
him to his feet*

*She leads him out through
the laboratory. Ralph and
Mrs. Watson silently watch
them pass. Then, while Mrs.
Watson goes to the divan and
kneels, Ralph sinks down
in Elizabeth's chair*

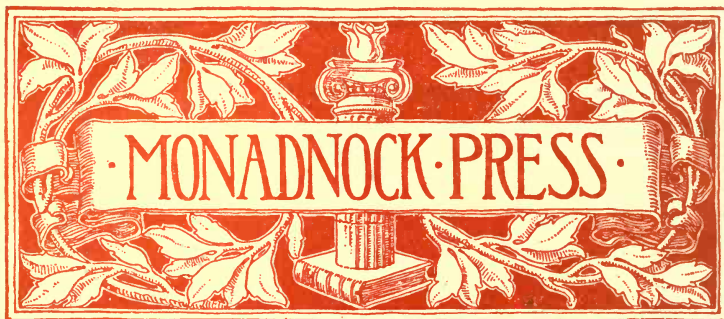
In hoarse, dead tones

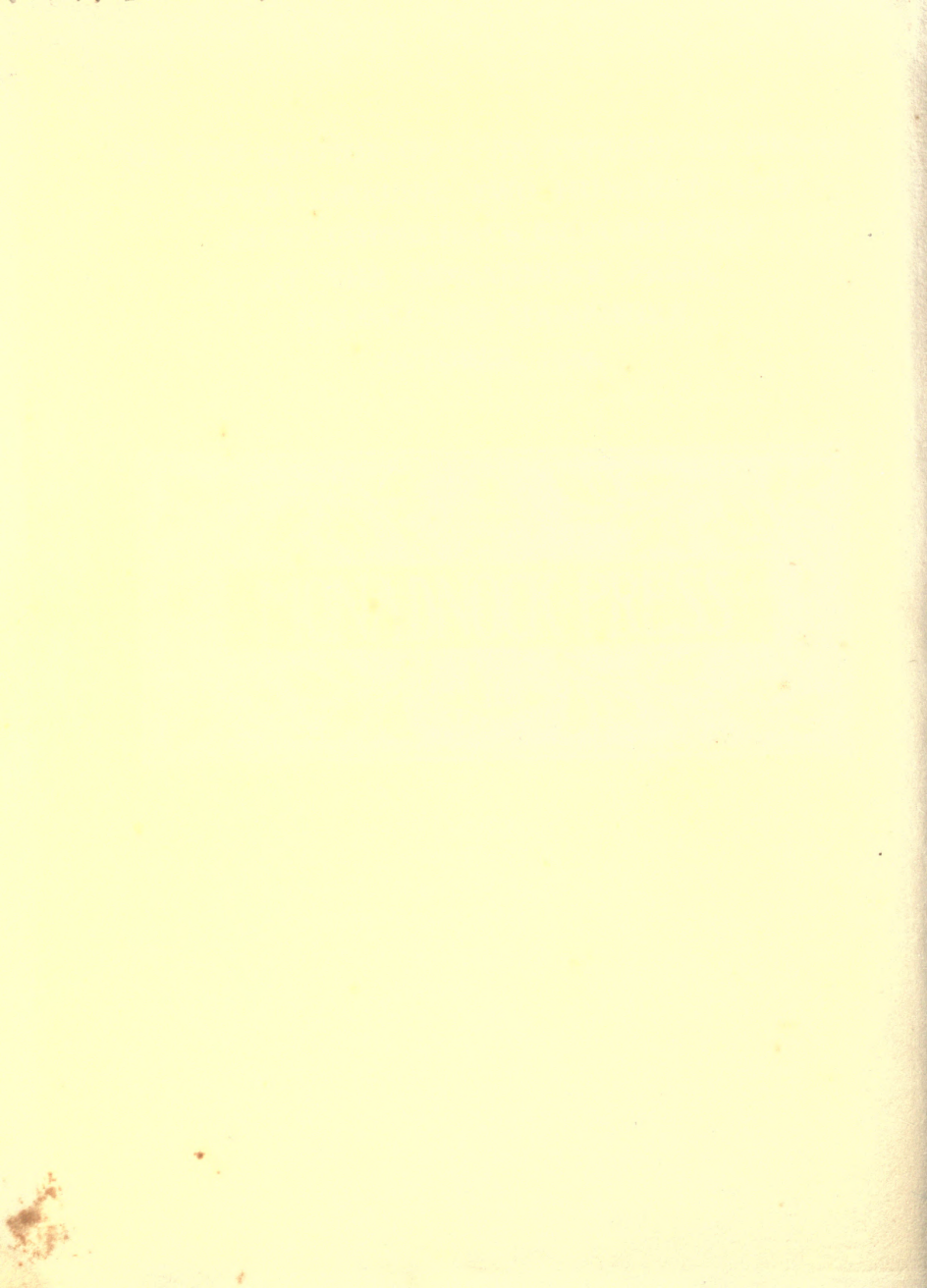
RALPH

Yes, we *must* live . . . we that are left.

CURTAIN

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